

President David O. McKay:

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, has just spoken to us. The combined choirs and the congregation will now sing "Praise To The Man Who Communed With Jehovah," conducted by Professor John R. Halliday.

After the singing Elder John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will speak to us.

The Combined Choirs and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Praise To The Man Who Communed With Jehovah," John R. Halliday conducting.

President David O. McKay:

Elder John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop of the Church, will now speak to us and he will be followed by Elder Theodore M. Burton.

BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

My dear brethren and sisters: I feel a great honor and responsibility was given me a year ago when I was called to be the Presiding Bishop. I pray humbly that my inadequacies will not be a hindrance to the fulfilment of this calling. I muster some courage as I think of the words of Francis Bacon when he said, "God hangs the greatest weights upon the smallest wires."

I realize that many others have had greater weights placed upon them. In particular, I am thinking of Joseph Smith who, as a boy, ventured into the unknown, searching for an answer to a query that came to him pertaining to some religious matters. In his innocence, he could not have known what lay before him as he sought his answer. He said, "While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*" (Joseph Smith 2:11.)

"So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. . . . It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

" . . . having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desire of my heart to God. . . ." (*Ibid.*, 2:14-15.)

This simple action of the faith of a

youth unfolded great truths to young Joseph. It was a reality that Satan stood by as a power of darkness and tried to overpower and destroy Joseph Smith, and he might have succeeded had it not been that God heard Joseph's supplication and appeared in the power of his light to dispel the evil.

Joseph said, ". . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, . . .

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"

And in answer to the question, "Which should I join?" came the reply, ". . . join none of them, for they were all wrong; . . . 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.'" (*Ibid.*, 2:16-17, 19.) And Jesus instructed Joseph that further direction would come to him.

This is the testimony of a young lad on whom God placed the "very great weight" of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To the noble way in which he carried it throughout his life, we give him thanks, honor, praise, and admiration. Though he was subjected to ridicule and punishment, his testimony remained steadfast with the state-

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ment, ". . . For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, . . ." (*Ibid.*, 2:25.)

Arthur E. Jensen makes this significant statement, "The only way an institution . . . can grow old is to stay young forever. . . . Its officers must have ears trained to catch the signals, . . ."

That The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is growing old, while staying young, cannot be denied. Its officers and leaders "have ears trained to catch the signals" of inspiration as God reveals them.

George W. Cornell writes, "Such were the humble, ridiculed beginnings, 135 years ago, of a movement that today has become one of the most prosperous, diversified and fast expanding religious forces in the world . . . that it should have reached its present stature from its most unpromising origin is a modern paradox."

Some may wonder why?

The answer comes that this is not a work of man—it is the eternal work of God, re-established in proper order and authority in this last Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

In the Book of Mormon, the ancient religious record of the inhabitants of North and South America, translated by the gift and power of God through Joseph Smith, is an explanation to the key of the vigor of this Church:

"For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, . . . sent angels to minister unto the children of men, . . ."

"And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, . . ."

"And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them." (*Moroni* 7:22-24.)

It further states: ". . . neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. . . ."

"And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, . . . by

declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, . . ."

"And by so doing, . . . prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, . . ." (*Ibid.*, 7:29, 31-32.)

Hereby God keeps his Church eternally young with vigor and power. He sends his ministering angels; he reveals his will to his prophets; and by divers means manifests truths to the children of men.

In the summer of 1828, the Lord revealed to the Prophet, ". . . Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them.

"Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great mystery;

"For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts;

"Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely.

"Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church." (*D&C* 10:63-67.)

John the Baptist commissioned by the Savior, as a resurrected being and an angel of God, in May of 1829, ministered unto two of God's chosen vessels, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and conferred upon them, ". . . the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 13.)

Here was the restoration of the authority to put into effect again the redeeming principles of the gospel.

He again confirmed the validity of the forgiveness of wrongdoing. ". . . go, and sin no more," was his decree. (*John* 8:11.) This we must understand.

John Locke, the English philosopher, expresses it this way, "Repentance is a hearty sorrow for our past misdeeds, and a sincere resolution and endeavor, to the utmost of our power, to conform all our actions to the law of God. It does not consist in one single act of sorrow, but in doing works meet for repentance, in a sincere obedience to the law of Christ for the remainder of our lives."

The ability to receive the blessings of repentance lies within our individual

power. It is a never-ending endeavor. There is no restriction to those who may achieve: All may partake of this gift from God.

The promise of Ezekiel is again made alive, "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezek. 18:21.)

The avenue of repentance is a thoroughfare which all may tread. It is the path to peace.

William Jennings Bryan gave us these words, "I am glad that our Heavenly Father did not make the peace of the human heart to depend upon our ability to buy it with money, secure it in society or win it at the polls, for in either case but few could have obtained it, but when He made peace the reward of a conscience void of offense toward God and man, He put it within the reach of all. The poor can secure

it as easily as the rich, the social outcasts as freely as the leaders of society, and the humblest citizen equally with those who wield political power." (From *The Prince of Peace*.)

May we give thanks to God for the great gift of the gospel of repentance, for its author, his Son Jesus Christ, for the boy Prophet who had the courage to carry the great weight placed upon him. For all those who succeeded him and to those who are laboring in building the kingdom of God on earth, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Brother John H. Vandenberg, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has just spoken to us. We shall now hear from Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, and at present president of the European Mission.

ELDER THEODORE M. BURTON

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a great pleasure again to be with you, and to participate in that which has taken place this day. I pledge anew my loyalty to the First Presidency and to the Quorum of the Twelve, and tell you that I know in my heart these men are called of God as prophets, seers, and revelators. I am grateful for their leadership, and I am grateful for my associates among the General Authorities. These are wonderful men, and I am very, very grateful for the privilege I have of working together with them.

Last Sunday I talked by telephone with all the mission presidents in the European Mission and received their reports. I am happy to tell you that the missionaries are well; they are happy; they are enjoying their work; and we are having great success in the European Mission.

Usually in summer we have quite a drop in converts during the time the Europeans take their summer holidays, for they take them very seriously. This year, just as the holidays were beginning, we had a wonderful visit from

President [Henry D.] Moyle and from Elder [Gordon] Hinckley. These two wonderful men, devoting themselves to the work of the Lord, came over to help us. I just can't express to you our gratitude for the help they gave us. As a result of their visit our August conversions were twenty-eight percent above our conversions for July. Our September conversions were thirty-seven percent above our August conversions.

These new converts are good people. They are excellent people. We were instructed to emphasize group instruction, and we were told—in fact, these brethren insisted—that we strive for true conversions. We are only interested in those people whose hearts had been broken and whose spirits are contrite. These are the people who have come into the Church. We have some wonderful, strong, new converts.

These are dedicated converts, willing to sacrifice and willing to work. There was nothing new in what these brethren told us. We can summarize it in just about four simple statements, but they are fundamental principles; for instance,